

PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

Protecting public health and safety by providing a reliable supply of safe, high quality water will remain the department's highest priority.

Philosophy

Water is essential for human consumption, maintaining health standards, and fire protection. Providing water for these purposes is required for the protection of public health and safety and is, therefore, the department's primary purpose. Fulfilling that responsibility to the public is possible only by providing water service that is reliable and safe.

The department is committed to ensuring that enough water is available for public health and safety purposes, and that contingency plans will support these needs in the event of emergency. While the department also plays an important role in supporting the quality of life in the region by providing water for other purposes, providing water service for public health and safety is a minimum standard of service.

A dependable supply of water and an infrastructure that can be counted on to deliver water where it is needed is also essential to protecting public health and safety. The department recognizes how critical maintaining system infrastructure and facilities is to assuring reliable water service. Maintaining the system infrastructure and facilities also protects property and lives by reducing the risk of system failures. For these reasons the department is committed to planning for, maintaining, and operating the system safely and in such a way as to deliver necessary quantities, flows and pressures.

Providing safe, high quality water service involves taking necessary steps to protect and prepare water to a quality that meets the high standards the community is accustomed to, and at a minimum meets standards developed by regulatory agencies. In providing safe drinking water, practices that prevent contamination are more effective, reliable, and prudent than the use of treatment to remove contamination after it has occurred. For this reason the department has a strong commitment to watershed protection. If watershed protection practices are not sufficient to meet increasingly stringent regulations, however, the department will plan for and provide necessary water quality treatment and monitoring to ensure a safe supply of drinking water. The department recognizes that the need for monitoring will increase and its role with wholesale customers will change to reflect the emerging regulations that treat water as a perishable product.

Providing high quality drinking water also entails some operations that use water in ways that may be perceived as wasteful. These include activities such as reservoir draining and washing, and periodic flushing of dead-end mains where water quality may deteriorate from standing for long periods. Because these activities are essential to maintaining the system for delivering safe drinking water, they cannot be eliminated. The department is committed, however, to conducting these operations with water use efficiency as the rule and communicating to the public about these operations to address misperceptions.

The department also recognizes its community responsibility to assist in

emergency situations outside of the service area. This may include providing temporary service to neighboring communities when public health and safety are in jeopardy.

Policy Implementation Guidelines

- (1) Favor planning or design options that have a higher reliability in preventing contamination.
- (2) Support research on emerging drinking water issues in the context of the department's high quality, well protected sources in a way that maintains its nationally known reputation for scientific capability.
- (3) Carefully track and contribute to the development of new federal regulations on water quality, and keep decision makers informed of these developments.
- (4) Size local distribution storage facilities and mains to meet fire flow requirements, to meet peak demand with minimal impact on the system, and to provide standby storage in accordance with appropriate state Department of Health design criteria.
- (5) Operate the water system in a way that balances the use of nonrevenue water for operational requirements with conservation goals.
- (6) Assist neighboring utilities during health emergencies.